

## Capital Planning Committee Meeting Minutes June 6, 2019

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In attendance: Stephen Andrew  
Ida Cody  
Charlie Foscett  
Chris Moore  
Sandy Pooler  
Brian Rehrig (via telephone)  
Barbara Thornton  
Timur Kaya Yontar

Not in attendance: Joseph Barr  
Phyllis Marshall-Hartman  
Michael Mason

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**Meeting Opened:** Mr. Foscett called the meeting to order at 5:07pm.

**Election of Officers:** Mr. Foscett announced he would not stand for re-election as chair. He nominated Mr. Rehrig as chair; Mr. Moore seconded. Mr. Rehrig thanked them but declined the nomination citing his health, and stated he would continue as a member, but not as vice-chair.

Mr. Foscett then asked Mr. Pooler to run the election, soliciting nominations for chair, then electing from the nominees; likewise for vice-chair and for recording secretary. For chair, nominations were for Mr. Moore and Mr. Yontar; Mr. Yontar received 7 votes to Mr. Moore's 1. For vice-chair, nominations were for Mr. Moore and Mr. Pooler; Mr. Moore received 6 votes to Mr. Pooler's 2. For recording secretary, Mr. Barr was elected unanimously by acclamation. Mr. Yontar's, Mr. Moore's, and Mr. Barr's terms as chair, vice-chair, and recording secretary (respectively) will begin on July 1, 2019.

**Open Items:** The committee ("CPC") took up discussion of a number of topics that had been under consideration prior to the start of Town Meeting.

### *1. How the CPC works with various department heads and the Facilities Department.*

Mr. Yontar summarized our prior consensus as "the department heads should speak to Steve Nesterak and team in Facilities before speaking to us in the fall." Mr. Pooler then told the CPC that Mr. Nesterak was resigning and that Mark Miano, who is retired, would be coming back part-time as acting head of Facilities for the next few months, and that we may not have a new Facilities Director until the fall.

Mr. Foscett recommended that the department heads should report on their buildings using the input form, and should distinguish between, first, preventive maintenance and responsive repairs, and second, programmatic changes and upgrades to enable them to carry out their departments' missions. The former ought to be under the purview of Facilities, as they are acting in a manner analogous to the "owners" of the building, while the latter is under the purview of the department heads, who are analogous to "tenants". The CPC did observe that there will be some likely variation from department to department in their expertise and level of involvement in the maintenance/repair of their buildings.

In terms of presentation in the Capital Budget, Mr. Moore and Ms. Cody proposed grouping all Facilities requests together in one place, whereas Mr. Andrew thought that each department should have its own requests (including Facilities-related) in its own separate department-level group. Mr. Yontar noted that we do both now, inconsistently.

Mr. Foskett and Mr. Pooler thought it best if the guidance that goes to the department heads be presented as “from the Town” and not from the CPC. Mr. Pooler already does provide such a memo that covers “what CPC does and how it works with you”; he will circulate a copy of this to CPC for review and comment prior to sending it to department heads later this summer. As part of the updates to the memo, Mr. Moore suggested that department heads provide as much advance warning as possible about significant new projects; Mr. Andrew broadened that to include substantial changes to the scope of projects. Mr. Yontar asked that the department heads be prepared to cover details including: what hasn’t yet been spent but will be; what hasn’t been spent and isn’t going to be; what remains in plan from prior budgets and whether there are changes; and what is brand-new in the plan at any point in the coming 5 years. Mr. Pooler noted that the guidance memo would include a reminder that “leftover” money from projects “is not your pot of money” and the rules that must be followed to repurpose that money.

## *2. The distinction between “maintenance” and “capital” expenditures.*

Ms. Cody provided a definition of capital expenditures as those done to extend or improve the life of an asset by a material amount. By contrast, fixes that merely keep an item in current working order ought to be deemed maintenance. The CPC did note that, dependent upon clever spin, a department head could describe a project in two different ways that could plausibly categorize it as opex or capex.

## *3. Rules for financing with cash vs. with bonds.*

Currently these rules are not codified, although we have followed rules of thumb of not bonding budget items costing less than \$50k. Mr. Pooler suggested that we publish our written policy, viewable by the general public and specifically by rating agencies. Mr. Foskett advised, however, that the policy allow some caveat providing flexibility in case, for example, an adverse economy led to reduced state aid that put severe pressure on the capital budget.

## *4. Suitability of CPC’s outputs.*

Mr. Yontar asked who is reading our report to Town Meeting and whether it is useful to them. Should we survey the Select Board, the Town Manager, department heads, and some set of Town Meeting Members to find out? Mr. Moore suggested that we invite anyone who spoke about the Capital Budget at this year’s Town Meeting to talk to the CPC. Mr. Pooler asked if the report contained sufficient detail about specific projects (much of the richness of what department heads send us in their requests is stripped away in the approval process); a particular example that he gave was information about the timeline of repairs to playgrounds.

**Software Sub-Committee (SSC):** Mr. Moore, Mr. Rehrig, and Ms. Thornton presented to the CPC.

Mr. Moore told the CPC that the current platform for gathering capital requests and reviewing it is outdated and data is stored haphazardly. The SSC proposes to move the database to the cloud, at an extremely low annual hosting cost, so it will no longer be a number of copies of Microsoft Access databases on various members’ PCs.

Mr. Rehrig observed that the PeopleForms front-end allows department heads to enter data but does not make review of such data easy, nor does it work well with Access. However, the SSC has not identified

an off-the-shelf product that we can use for review and reporting. The recommendation is to continue to use Access, to restructure the database, and to (custom) re-write the front end to make it easily usable by both Town staff and CPC members. Annie LaCourt has offered to help with this.

Mr. Moore said the database would store information about which projects were proposed and which were approved – for every project, in every year. For entry by Town staff, it would pre-populate years 1-4 from the prior year's entries. Data would be exportable into a spreadsheet for reports, tables, and graphs.

Mr. Foscett questioned whether the Town is moving to the cloud; Mr. Pooler replied yes, to an Outlook / Office 365 / Sharepoint system, which David Goode's team is rolling out, although it is next in queue after the current Townwide rollout of phone upgrades. Mr. Foscett reminded us that whatever we have custom-built needs to be compatible with the Town's systems.

Ms. Cody asked that the input system have data integrity safeguards, to which Mr. Rehrig replies that users' editing capabilities are already fairly limited, but permission levels could provide the needed safety. Mr. Andrew requested that the system include a change log to increase accountability. Mr. Pooler asked who was going to do the data-entry and verification work, noting that currently Town staff checks the database entries against the minutes. Mr. Moore and Mr. Rehrig said that CPC could do this real-time during meetings, and staff could verify afterward, with the final approval "locking" the request against further edits. Entries would retain scores for "priority" and for "benefit to the Town" and users would be able to attach supporting documentation.

Ms. Thornton proposed that the capital budget requests speak a common language with MUNIS, specifically the Comptroller's Chart of Accounts codes, which aligns with Department of Revenue guidelines. Mr. Andrew and Mr. Moore asked about timing – if these codes do not exist for a capital project until it is authorized by a Town Meeting vote (as Ms. Cody told us), are we able to use them before then in the planning process?

Although the SSC has made progress, much more work remains, thus we will continue to use the existing platform for the coming year (2019-2020) with the plan to roll out a replacement in 2020-2021.

**Other Business:** Mr. Yontar asked whether there was any objection to keeping the current practice of having CPC meetings on Thursdays, 5-7pm, every other week. Hearing none, we plan to continue to do so in the fall. At present no additional summer meetings are contemplated.

**Meeting Adjourned:** The meeting adjourned unanimously at 6:57pm.